

## Message Text

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20

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 OMB-01 SAM-01 IO-10 /080 W

----- 090319

R 281350Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY SANAA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5596

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMCONSUL DHAHRAN

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

RUQMHRWAMEMBASSY TEHRAN 366

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANAA 1302

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, YE, SA

SUBJECT: AL-HAMDI AND AL-AHMAR VISITS TO RIYADH

BEGIN SUMMARY: ON MAY 27 FOREIGN MINISTER AL-ASNAG STATED THAT PRESIDENT AL-HAMDI RECEIVED FULL BACKING OF SAUDIS DURING HIS RECENT VISIT TO RIYADH. SHAIKH ABDULLAH AL-AHMAR ON THE OTHER HAND WAS TOLD BY SAUDIS TO COOPERATE WITH AL-HAMDI DURING HIS SUBSEQUENT TRIP TO RIYADH. AL-ASNAG ALSO TOLD ME IN STRICTEST CONFIDENCE THAT HAMDI COMPLAINED TO KING KHALID ABOUT ACTIVITIES OF SAUDI AMBASSADOR HERE. AL-ASNAG DID NOW KNOW IF THIS PORTENDS REMOVAL OF THE AMBASSADOR. EVERYTHING WE HEAR CORROBORATES AL-ASNAG'S REPORT THAT SAUDIS ARE NOW FULLY SUPPORTING AL-HAMDI. END SUMMARY

1. DURING MAY 27 DINNER FOREIGN MINISTER ABDULLAH AL-ASNAG DESCRIBED RECENT VISITS TO RIYADH OF PRESIDENT IBRAHIM MOHAMMAD AL-HAMDI AND PRESIDENT OF CONSULTATIVE ASSEMBLY ABDULLAH AL-AHM BM AL-ASNAG SAID THAT  
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AL-HAMDI'S WAS THE MOST IMPRESSIVE AND BEST VISIT TO

RIYAD EVER UNDERTAKEN BY A YEMENI HEAD OF STATE. THE ENTIRE SAUDI GOVERNMENT FROM THE KING THROUGH THE CABINET AND TOP MEMBERS OF THE ROYAL FAMILY WERE AT THE AIRPORT TO GREET AL-HAMDI, THUS EMPHASIZING SAUDI ARABIA'S SUPPORT FOR HAMDI AND THE YEMEN CENTRAL GOVERNMENT. DURING THE MEETING WHICH ENSUED, KING KHALID AND PRINCES FAHD, SULTAN AND ABUDLLAH ALL STESSED SAUDI "RESPONSIBILITY" TO HELP YEMEN AND PARTICULARLY TO HELP THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT OF YEMEN. AT ONE POINT, WHEN THE DISCUSSION CAME AROUND TO THE SUBJECT OF SHAIKH AL-AHMAR, PRINCE FAHD INTERJECTED TO SAY "LET'S NOT WASTE TIME TALKING ABOUT THIS MATTER WHEN WE HAVE MORE IMPORTANT THINGS TO DISCUSS WITH OUR YEMENI BROTHERS". ASNAG CONTINUED THAT THE YEMENIS DEDUCED FROM THIS REMARK AS WELL AS FROM THE IMPRESSIVE WELCOME AND SYMPATHETIC HEARINGS THAT THE SAUDIS HAVE NOW IN FACT THROWN THEIR FULL SUPPORT TO AL-HAMDI AND TO THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT. AL-ASNAG COMMENTED THAT THIS COULD TURN OUT TO BE THE MOST IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENT IN YEMEN'S MODERN HISTORY BECAUSE NOW YEMEN GOVERNMENT CAN BEGIN DEVOTING ALL ITS ATTENTION TO DEVELOPMENT KNOWING THAT SAUDIS ARE FULLY BEHIND THIS ENDEAVOR.

2. AL-ASNAG CONTRASTED AL-HAMDI'S IMPRESSIVE WELCOME WITH THE LOW-KEY, ALMOST PERFUNCTORY RECEPTION ACCORDED BY SAUDIS TO AL-AHMAR WHO WAS GREETED AT AIRPORT BY LOW-RANKING OFFICIAL REPRESENTING RIYADH MUNICIPALITY. AL-AHMAR WAS TAKEN IMMEDIATELY FROM THE AIRPORT TO KING KHALID'S PALACE WHERE HE WAS ONLY GIVEN A FEW MOMENTS OF THE KINGS TIME. WHEN AL-AHMAR ATTEMPTED TO BRING CONVERSATION AROUND TO RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN YEMEN, KING KHALID CUT HIM SHORT AND TOLD HIM THAT "HIS FRIEND" PRINCE SULTAN WOULD DISCUSS THESE MATTERS WITH HIM. SULTAN, HOWEVER, WAS NOT AVAILABLE TO MEET AL-AHMAR UNTIL LATE AFTERNOON WHICH MEANT AL-AHMAR WAS KEPT WAITING FOR OVER FIVE HOURS. SULTAN DID NOT WASTE HIS WORDS ON AL-AHMAR. ALTHOUGH COUCHING THEM IN TYPICALLY POLITE ARAB PHRASEOLOGY THROUGHOUT, SULTAN'S MESSAGE WAS THAT SAUDI ARABIA IS SUPPORTING THE YEMEN CENTRAL GOVERNMENT UNDER AL-HAMDI AND THAT IT WISHES AL-AHMAR TO PARTICIPATE

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IN THIS GOVERNMENT WHICH SAUDI ARABIA CONSIDERS TO BE YEMEN'S BEST CHANCE FOR DEVELOPMENT AND STABILITY. SULTAN POINTED OUT THAT IT WAS AL-AHMAR HIMSELF WHO PUSHED AL-HAMDI TO TAKE OVER THE GOVERNMENT LAST JUNE AND NOW THE SAUDI GOVERNMENT CAN NOT UNDERSTAND WHY AL-AHMAR IS UPSET THAT HAMDI HAS TAKEN MOVES AGAINST PERSONS OF WHOM BOTH AL-AHMAR AND THE SAUDIS HAVE LONG BEEN SUSPICIOUS. SULTAN ADVISED AL-AHMAR TO COOPERATE

WITH AL-HAMDI IN ORDER TO AVOID THE POSSIBILITY OF INTERNAL CONFLICT WHICH COULD ONLY BENEFIT THE ENEMIES OF BOTH YEMEN AND OF SAUDI ARABIA.

3. AL-ASNAG ALSO TOLE ME IN STRICTEST CONFIDENCE THAT AL-HAMDI COMPLAINED TO KING KHALID ABOUT THE ACTIVITIES OF THE SAUDI AMBASSADOR WHO DOES NOT APPEAR TO UNDERSTAND THAT HE IS AN AMBASSADOR IN YEMEN AND NOT A ROYAL SAUDI GOVERNOR DISPENSING LARGESSE TO ONE AND ALL AS THE SPIRIT MOVES HIM. AL-ASNAG DID NOT KNOW IF THE SAUDI AMBASSADOR WOULD SURVIVE BUT BELIEVED THAT THE SAUDIS NOW HAVE A MUCH BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF YEMEN'S INTERNAL DEVELOPMENTS, THANKS IN GREAT PART TO THE WORK OF THE SAUDI MILITARY ATTACHE WHO PROVIDED AL-ASNAG WITH THE ACCOUNT OF AL-AHMAR'S VISIT AS GIVEN ABOVE.

4. COMMENT: BASED ON ASNAG'S ACCOUNT AS WELL AS ON OTHER REPORTS WE HAVE RECEIVED, IT APPEARS THAT THE SAUDIS HAVE, INDEED, DECIDED TO SUPPORT HAMDI AND HIS GROUP. THIS COULD WELL TURN OUT TO BE THE MAJOR POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE YEAR FOR YEMEN, MARKING AS IT MAY THE BEGINNING OF A MODERATE PRAGMATIC CENTRAL GOVERNMENT, CAPABLE OF IMPLEMENTING YEMEN'S LONG OVERDUE PLANS FOR DEVELOPMENT.  
SCOTES

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